

**146-148 NEW CROSS ROAD**

**LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**MARCH 2009**

**DOCUMENT VERIFICATION**

**146-148 NEW CROSS ROAD**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

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**An Archaeological Watching Brief at 146-148 New Cross Road,  
London Borough of Lewisham SE14**

**Site Code: NCQ09**

**Central National Grid Reference: TQ 3565 7700.**

**Written and Researched by J. Payne**

**Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited, March 2009**

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## CONTENTS

1	ABSTRACT	3
2	INTRODUCTION	4
3	GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY	7
4	ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	8
5	ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY	10
6	SUMMARY OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE	11
7	INTERPRETATION AND CONCLUSIONS	15
8	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	16

### Appendices

9	Appendix 1: Context Index	17
10	Appendix 2: Site Matrix	18
11	Appendix 3: OASIS Form	19

### Illustrations

	Figure 1: Site Location	5
	Figure 2: Trench Location	6
	Figure 3: Sections	14

## **1 ABSTRACT**

- 1.1 This report details the results and working methods of an archaeological watching brief conducted during the commencement of the main ground works, at 146-148 New Cross Road. The watching brief was commissioned by Strand Construction and Development Limited and took place on the 25 February 2009.
  
- 1.2 The watching brief followed a Written Scheme of Investigation, approved by English Heritage, which was prepared and issued by Tim Bradley, Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. The watching brief observed the excavation of the foundation trench for the footprint of the main structure, which totalled approximately 65m of connected trenching.
  
- 1.3 These trenches revealed a general sequence of natural geological drift deposits overlain by subsoil and a buried topsoil of late post-medieval date. Other evidence of later post-medieval activity was seen in the form of a brick soak-away and levelling deposits which were probably associated with the newly demolished buildings. No further archaeological features or finds were observed during the watching brief.

## **2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at 146-148 New Cross Road, London Borough of Lewisham during the commencement of the main ground works and after the clearance of the site. This work was undertaken on the 25 February 2009 by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited.
- 2.2 The site comprises a long narrow northeast-southwest aligned strip of land, the northeastern boundary of which is defined by New Cross Road, whilst the southwestern boundary is defined by Fisher Court. Both the northwest and southeast boundaries are delineated by the adjacent properties. The site is centred on National Grid Reference TQ 3565 7700 (Figure 2).
- 2.3 The work was commissioned by Strand Construction and Development Limited and was monitored by Mark Stevenson of English Heritage on behalf of the London Borough of Lewisham. The project was managed for Pre-Construct Archaeology by Tim Bradley and supervised by the author.
- 2.4 A unique site code, NCQ09 was assigned to the site by the Museum of London.



Figure 1  
Site Location  
1:20,000 at A4



Figure 2  
Trench Location and Trench Plan  
1:250 at A4



### **3 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

- 3.1 The Geological Survey of Great Britain 1:50 000 scale map of the area (Sheet 270, 'South London') suggests the site is underlain by the Quaternary Kempton Park Gravel River Terrace overlying fine grained glauconite quartz sands of the Tertiary Thanet Beds (George 1999; Thompson 2008).
  
- 3.2 At present the site is relatively flat and is at around 4.50m OD. However Fisher court clearly shows a topography that slopes down slightly towards the northwest.

## 4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 The site is situated at the south of an Archaeological Priority Area (AP14):

**APA 14 New Cross** - Lewisham UDP – Adopted July 2004<sup>1</sup>

*The name is derived from the sign of the Golden Cross carried by a well-known medieval coaching house on Watling Street. Recent excavation on New Cross Road has also revealed that sometime after purchasing the manor estate in 1614, the Haberdashers Company established a brickworks, possibly supplying the demand which followed the Fire of London. Counter Hill House built in the 18th century was a boarding school between 1792 and 1837 before making way for Goldsmiths College (Listed Grade II). The site of the Cromacks nursery is evidence of the importance of local market gardens which supplied expanding populations of Deptford and Southwark during the 18<sup>th</sup> century.*

4.2 There is limited archaeological potential for the prehistoric through to the medieval periods, although the site is situated to the south west of the projected line of the southern detour of Roman Watling Street. The main concentration of post-medieval activity is situated further to the east. Whilst the area of the site is likely to have been situated in open fields up until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, some evidence of development to the east along New Cross Road has previously been recorded:

- Excavations at 274 New Cross Road uncovered a brick kiln dated to 1619, as well as 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century pits and a 19<sup>th</sup> century sewer (SMR LO75679).
- At Goodwood Road a number of pits were recorded during a watching brief which appear to have been backfilled in the late 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, and these are thought to be associated with the construction of settlement along New Cross Road.
- At Goldsmiths College two sherds of post-medieval red ware pottery (1600 – 1800) were recovered (SMR LO70902)
- At 6 Tanners Hill, pits containing 18<sup>th</sup> century refuse were identified.

4.3 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited have previously undertaken archaeological investigations on the NDC site, situated immediately to the west of Fisher Court

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<sup>1</sup> Schedule 3 – Areas of Archaeological Priority protected by Policy URB 21

and extending northwards up to New Cross Road<sup>2</sup>. Here natural sand was recorded across the site, overlain by intact brickearth across the majority of the trial pits, with a relict horticultural horizon overlying the brickearth in many instances. Truncations from 19<sup>th</sup> century housing were fairly localised, with only two possible basement areas exposed. Despite the limited truncation and the presence of intact brickearth deposits, no archaeological activity pre-dating the 19<sup>th</sup> century was recorded.

- 4.4 The area of the site itself is likely to have continued as open land, perhaps in use as market gardens, into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Properties occupying 146-148 New Cross Road are first apparent on the Deptford Tithe Map of 1844, with outbuildings visible occupying the rear of the garden plots in the area of the site in the 1894-96 Ordnance Survey. The site appears to then remain unchanged until the present day.

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<sup>2</sup> Sargent, A. 2007 *An Archaeological Watching Brief at New Cross NDC, New Cross Gate, London Borough of Lewisham*. Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited Unpublished Report

## **5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY**

- 5.1 The excavation of the building foundation trench was undertaken on the 25<sup>th</sup> February 2009 as the initial stage of the ground work.
- 5.2 The objective of the watching brief was to identify in advance of the main building works the presence of any surviving archaeological remains and if present to excavate and record as necessary.
- 5.3 The excavation of the main building footprint was undertaken using a small tracked mechanical excavator.
- 5.4 Individual descriptions of all archaeological and geological strata and features excavated and/or exposed were entered onto pro-forma recording sheets. All plans and sections of archaeological deposits were recorded on polyester based drawing film, the plans being drawn at a scale of 1:50 and the sections at 1:10. A single context recording system was used.
- 5.5 Heights were calculated from an Ordnance Survey point situated at the junction of Besson Street and New Cross Road.
- 5.6 A full photographic record was kept of the foundation trenches and the recorded trench sections and their stratigraphic sequences during excavation.

## **6 SUMMARY OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE**

### **6.1 Summary**

6.1.1 The excavation of the foundation trenches revealed a sequence of natural mottled silty sand overlain by natural homogenous silty sandy clay that was sealed by a sub-soil. Two late post-medieval soil deposits that represent topsoil graded by bioturbation overlay this, whilst the final deposit recorded comprised mixed soils associated with the ongoing building works. Within the western corner of the foundation trench a circular brick soakaway was also revealed that is thought to have been associated with the previous phase of development. No archaeological features which pre-date the late post-medieval period (late 19<sup>th</sup> century) were identified during the watching brief.

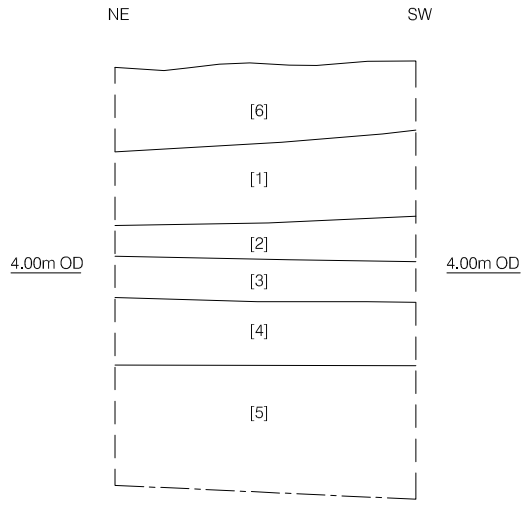
### **6.2 The foundation trench**

6.2.1 The building foundation comprised three 11.00m long northeast –southwest parallel trenches, between 0.60m to 0.80m in width which were linked by four 7.00m long northwest-southeast parallel trenches of 0.60m in width. These formed a rectangular building footprint that measured approximately 11.00m x 7.00m. The trenches were excavated to a depth of between 1.10m to 1.40m, the exception being the area of the brick soakaway which was excavated to a depth of 2.60m

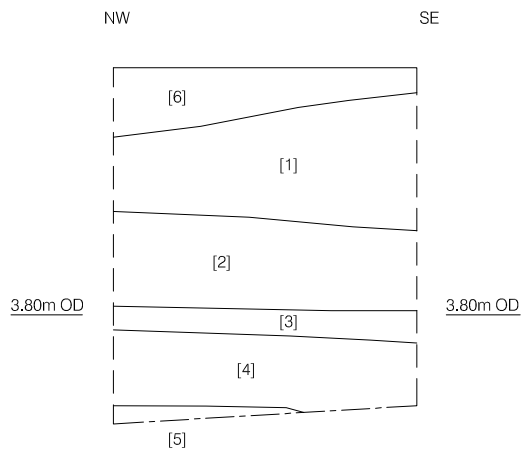
6.2.2 The earliest deposit revealed was seen throughout the whole length of the trench and comprised a friable mottled light brown and mid orange-brown silty sand [5]. The height for the top of this deposit was approximately between 3.50m to 3.70m OD. This deposit is likely to represent a natural drift deposit, which has undergone post-depositional processes, probably chemical precipitation producing the mottled appearance. This deposit was only partly excavated to a maximum depth of 0.44m.

- 6.2.3 Directly overlying this was a friable mid brown silty sand [4] that contained very occasional carbon flecks. The deposit had a maximum thickness of 0.25m, an approximate surface level of between 3.70m to 3.90m OD and was seen intermittently throughout the trench. The formation process for this deposit is clearly natural and is likely to represent the same a natural drift deposit as [5], although here no evidence of the chemical precipitation was revealed.
- 6.2.4 Overlying this was a friable mid greyish brown silty sand [3] that contained occasional small charcoal, mortar and CBM flecks. This deposit and had an approximate surface level of between 3.80m and 4.05m OD and a maximum thickness of 0.14m. As with the underlying deposits this was also seen intermittently throughout the trench and is likely to represent a naturally derived subsoil deposit that probably formed through a combination of bioturbation and colluvial activity.
- 6.2.5 Sealing this subsoil was a 0.30m thick loose dark brownish grey silty sand [2] that contained moderate rounded pebbles plus occasional mortar and CBM flecks. The deposit had an approximate surface level of 4.03m to 4.14m OD and was seen intermittently throughout the trench. This deposit is likely to represent a naturally derived topsoil deposit, probably a less bioturbated version of overlying topsoil deposit [1].
- 6.2.6 Sealing this was a 0.45m thick loose dark greyish black gritty silty sand [1] that contained frequent rounded pebbles plus occasional mortar and CBM fragments. The deposit had an approximate surface level of 4.40m to 4.53m OD and was seen intermittently throughout the trench. This deposit is likely to represent a naturally derived topsoil deposit, probably a more bioturbated or worked version of underlying deposit [2], possibly thickened by gradual importation of organic material.
- 6.2.7 Soakaway [7] was located in the western corner of the trench and survived as a 1.50m diameter crudely constructed circular brick “honeycomb” style structure surviving to a height of around 2.10m. The top of the structure was capped with a large flat stone and the main body appeared to be constructed without using any mortar bonding. A brick sample retrieved from the structure gave a late 19<sup>th</sup> century date for the feature.
- 6.2.8 The final deposit recorded was a loose, mixed dark soil [6] that contained frequent pebbles, CBM, metal fragments and other modern debris. This deposit was seen throughout the whole length of the trench had an approximate surface level between

4.60m and 4.70m OD and a thickness of around 0.28m. This deposit represents mixed demolition debris created by the ongoing demolition works.



Section 1  
Northwest Facing



Section 2  
Southwest Facing



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Figure 3  
Sections 1 & 2  
1:25 at A4



## **7 INTERPRETATION AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 7.1 The excavation of the trench revealed a stratigraphic sequence comprising natural drift geology probably of immediate post-glacial origin that had undergone chemical precipitation. This was overlain by a second drift deposit, which is likely to represent the same deposit that has undergone slightly different post-depositional processes. The surface level for these deposits was between 3.50m to 3.70m OD for the lower drift and 3.70m to 3.90m OD for the upper deposit. Overlying this was a subsoil deposit with a surface level of between 3.80m and 4.05m OD that is likely to have formed through various differing processes over an extended period. Sealing this subsoil was a series of topsoil deposits. The surface level recorded for the highest topsoil was between 4.03m to 4.14m OD.
- 7.2 The remaining stratigraphic sequence seen within the trenches is clearly associated with, or are later than the late post-medieval construction phase. This included a brick soak-away and levelling deposits which were probably associated with the newly demolished buildings.
- 7.3 Although no significant archaeological features were identified and only late post-medieval artefacts were recovered during the excavation, it is clear that areas of the site still preserve an in-situ sequence of natural glacial soils, subsoil and late post-medieval topsoil.

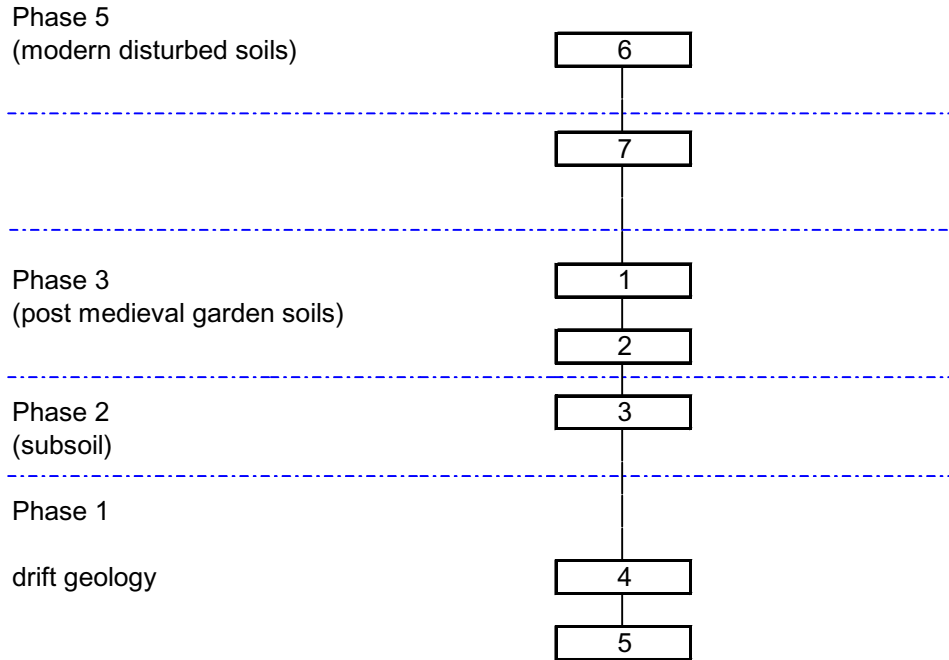
## **8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

- 8.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited would like to thank Strand Construction and Development Limited for commissioning the project. The work was monitored by Mark Stevenson of English Heritage on behalf of the London Borough of Lewisham.
- 8.2 The author would like to thank Tim Bradley for his project management and the grounds crew for their on-site co-operation. Additional thanks to Jenny Simonson for the illustrations.

## 9 APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INDEX

Context No	Section No	Phase	Type	Description
1	1 & 2		Layer	19th century garden soil
2	1 & 2		Layer	lower or buried topsoil
3	1 & 2		Layer	in-situ subsoil
4	1 & 2		Layer	bioturbated natural
5	1 & 2		Layer	natural drift geology
6	1 & 2		Layer	disturbed soil across site
7			Layer	circular brick soakaway

## 10 APPENDIX 2: SITE MATRIX



## 11 APPENDIX 3: OASIS FORM

### 11.1 OASIS ID: preconst1-57000

#### Project details

Project name An Archaeological Watching Brief at 146-148 New Cross Road

Short description of the project An archaeological watching brief was conducted during the commencement of the main ground works, at 146-148 New Cross Road. The watching brief observed the excavation of the foundation trench for the footprint of the main structure, which totalled approximately 65m of connected trenching. These trenches revealed a general sequence of natural geological drift deposits overlain by subsoil and a buried topsoil of late post-medieval date. Other evidence of later post-medieval activity was seen in the form of a brick soak-away and levelling deposits which were probably associated with the newly demolished buildings. No further archaeological features or finds were observed during the watching brief.

Project dates Start: 25-02-2009 End: 25-02-2009

Previous/future work No / No

Type of project Recording project

Current use Land Other 5 - Garden

Monument type SOAKAWAY Post Medieval

Significant Finds    CBM Post Medieval

Investigation type    'Watching Brief'

**Project location**

Country                England

Site location        GREATER LONDON LEWISHAM DEPTFORD AND NEWCROSS  
146-148 New Cross Road

Postcode             SE14

Study area            80.00 Square metres

Site coordinates    TQ 3565 7700 51.4751727594 -0.04653552060830 51 28 30 N 000  
02 47 W Point

Height    OD    /    Min: 3.50m Max: 3.70m  
Depth

**Project creators**

Name                    of Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd  
Organisation

Project brief GLAAS  
originator

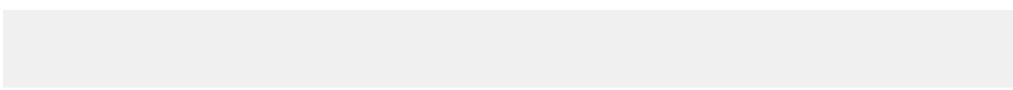
Project design Tim Bradley  
originator

Project Tim Bradley  
director/manager

Project John Payne  
supervisor

Type of Developer  
sponsor/funding  
body

Name of Strand Construction and Development Limited  
sponsor/funding  
body



**Project  
archives**

Physical Archive LAARC  
recipient

Physical Contents 'Ceramics'

Digital Archive LAARC  
recipient

Digital Media 'Text'  
available

Paper Archive LAARC  
recipient

Paper Media 'Context  
available sheet', 'Matrices', 'Photograph', 'Plan', 'Report', 'Section', 'Unpublished  
Text'



**Project  
bibliography 1**

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)



Entered by Tim Bradley (tbradley@pre-construct.com)

Entered on 17 March 2009